

**Strategic Priorities**  
**Association of Applied Biologists**  
**2021 – 2022**  
**President, Christine H. Foyer**  
**Disrupting the Market Place**

The ‘Association of Economic Biologists’ has a firm foundation and long history of scientific excellence, supporting applied biology through the sharing of new knowledge at networking events, conferences and through its publications, as well as promoting the activities and achievements of its members across academia and industry. My aim as President for the next two years is to build on this firm foundation, in order to support and serve the applied biology community, while promoting and rewarding excellence and dedicated service.

Over the last two years the current President, Stuart Knight has deftly sailed the AAB through turbulent times as the international community has adapted to the restrictions of COVID. In addition, he has ensured that the Association is in a sound financial position that offers new opportunities as well as be well placed to face future challenges. Approaches to conference and meeting organisation have evolved during this period from the original model of largely face-to-face meetings to one where the scientific community is used to meeting remotely through Webinars and on-line services. The office has swiftly adapted and accommodated these new ways of working, seamlessly organising Webinars to replace face-to-face meetings. This success is down to the competence and direction of President, the office team and event management organisation. In addition, Stuart has strengthened the incorporation of early career researchers within Council, specialist groups and at events. He has ensured that the Association continues to be a flagship of success and a beacon for unification of the Applied Biology Community. This excellent and steadfast management has placed the Association in pole position for future growth in terms of academic engagement, national and international recognition and the development of a larger portfolio of activities. While it was always inevitable that the current Executive Officer, Carol Millman, would one day leave the Association to take on new opportunities and undertake even greater adventures, her knowledge, her experience and skills in the office will be greatly missed.

In order to grasp new and unfolding opportunities, as well as addressing current and future challenges, with regard to the office structure and the everchanging publication and scientific communication landscapes, while also meeting the needs of industry and society, there are several directions linked to key areas of AAB activity, where renewed endeavour is likely to reap benefits and improve the fitness of the Association for the future. The objectives that I have set for the next two years are:

- Ensuring that the transition of AAB office is smooth and efficient through the appointment of a new Executive Office
- Initiating new activities that will promote the role of the Association in the community such as awards for excellence, new publications and interactions with other societies

- Ensuring that the future conference activities of the AAB evolve to the new “normal” of part remote and part face to face meetings

### **Future-Proofing the AAB office**

The retirement of the current Executive Officer, Carol Millman, will undoubtedly provide challenges to office organisation and operation. However, with every challenge comes an opportunity. We aim to appoint a experienced office manager, who will invigorate AAB office management, motivate colleagues and set new operational targets, while continuing to uphold the high standards of excellence and efficiency. All AAB activities depend fundamentally on the successful operation of AAB office. Ensuring the successful transition to the new office manager is thus a prerequisite to the future success of the society.

### **Initiating new areas of AAB Activity**

While scientific meetings will continue to lifeblood of AAB functions, the current stable financial position enables consideration of new ways to interact with the community that the Association serves. In particular, I would like to explore opportunities to institute awards for excellence and dedicated service to AAB, such as a Presidents medal and Up and Coming Scientist Award, as well as the possibilities for new publications, possibly through cooperation with other societies, and a large Celebration Conference that spans the interests of many of the Specialist Groups. In particular, it is appropriate to direct at least some of these activities to increasing the profile of the Association in the international arena.

### **Adjusting AAB conference organisation to meet future needs**

The AAB has traditionally held conferences and workshops with a variety of formats, spanning science, policy and practice. These events continue to be organised with a relatively easy transition to on-line formats as the COVID restrictions have curtailed opportunities for face-to-face meetings. The next two years will be pivotal for conference organisation for all Societies, as traditional formats evolve to meet the new aspirations and requirements of post-COVID academia and industry. Seizing the opportunities for more flexible formats, with appropriate pricing are vital to the continued success of the Association. These events will continue to be vital to the delivery of the AAB mission to promote applied biology. Hence, the organisation of the full portfolio of planned future events must meet the changes demands of the membership within the context of feasibility and funder sponsorship meetings, in order to achieve the targeted attendances, with as few cancellations or postponements as possible.

Christine H. Foyer, 24/11/2020